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Security Council

Sixty-seventh year

Provisional

6777th meeting
Thursday, 31 May 2012, 9 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Mehdiyev	(Azerbaijan)
Members:	China	Mr. Tian Lin
	Colombia	Mr. Alzate
	France	Mr. Briens
	Germany	Mr. Wittig
	Guatemala	Mr. Rosenthal
	India	Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri
	Morocco	Mr. Loulichki
	Pakistan	Mr. Tarar
	Portugal	Mr. Cabral
	Russian Federation	Mr. Zhukov
	South Africa	Mr. Sangqu
	Togo	Mr. Kandangha-Bariki
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Parham
	United States of America	Ms. Rice

Agenda

Security Council mission

Briefing by Security Council mission to West Africa (18 to 24 May 2012)

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The meeting was called to order at 9.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council mission

Briefing by Security Council mission to West Africa (18-24 May 2012)

The President: I should like to welcome the return of the members of the Council and the Secretariat who took part in the Security Council mission to West Africa.

At this meeting, the Council will hear briefings by the Permanent Representative of the United States of America, the Deputy Permanent Representative of France, on behalf of the Permanent Representative of France, and the Permanent Representative of South Africa.

I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Susan Rice, co-leader of the Security Council mission to Liberia.

Ms. Rice (United States of America): On behalf of my co-leader, Ambassador Loulichki, I would like to begin this report on the Council's trip to Liberia by thanking the Officer-in-Charge of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), Moustapha Soumaré, and his team for welcoming us and for greatly facilitating our successful visit.

The Council undertook the trip, which was our first to Liberia since 2009, to examine the country's efforts to improve its security and rule of law institutions, to foster national reconciliation and to position itself for UNMIL's eventual drawdown. We also assessed inter-mission cooperation between UNMIL and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), as well as the security challenges along the Ivorian-Liberian border.

Although our visit was short, we covered a great deal of ground. We arrived in Monrovia on the afternoon of 19 May and met with President Johnson-Sirleaf and members of her Cabinet. President Johnson-Sirleaf told us that her Government's priorities included improving youth education and employment opportunities, access to equitable justice, infrastructure development and reconciliation efforts. She stressed that improving rule of law capabilities, economic growth, governance and human development were key to Liberia's future, and commended the strong partnership between the United Nations and Liberia.

When asked about UNMIL's transition, the President called for greater international support for Liberia's police, because Liberia's domestic capacity to provide security needed to increase in line with the expected decrease in United Nations troops. She also stressed that corruption remained a significant problem. Our discussion covered regional concerns, including the Ivorian border region and the crises in Mali and Guinea-Bissau, as well as the challenges of resolving domestic land ownership disputes.

The following day, the Council visited Liberia's National Police Training Academy, where we discussed rule of law challenges with the Minister of Justice, the Inspector-General of the police, and the heads of the Drug Enforcement Agency and the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization. The Minister of Justice stressed the need to decentralize the delivery of justice to the people, and cited the five planned United Nations peacebuilding-supported justice hubs, the first of which will open in June, as critical to extending State authority throughout the country. She described Liberia's preparations for UNMIL's gradual drawdown, and requested continued coordination with UNMIL to ensure a smooth transition.

Council members discussed the challenges to improving Liberia's internal security, including financial limitations, staffing and supporting remote security outposts, and the threat posed by international drug traffickers and organized criminals. The mission met with UNMIL's leadership and the United Nations country team, hosted by the Indian all-female formed police unit, which continues to demonstrate the value of women's participation in Liberia's security institutions. They also put on an excellent presentation of their martial arts skills during police training exercises.

With the United Nations leadership, we discussed the difficulties of increasing Liberia's police capacity, including its ability to train and support a force large and capable enough to allow UNMIL to draw down responsibly. The Council was briefed on the challenge of addressing human rights abuses, especially sexual and gender-based violence. UNMIL stressed the ongoing positive coordination with Liberia's leaders in planning for the transition period.

Our meeting with roughly 30 Liberian civil society leaders focused on the obstacles to lasting national

reconciliation. In a vibrant exchange of views, the leaders pressed for increasing the role and voice of women in Government, enhanced interreligious dialogue, and addressing corruption and impunity. The Council also visited an UNMIL-supported programme in Congo Town that offers livelihood training to women who were engaged in harmful practices to other women and girls. The programme provided its participants with alternative income-generation skills and helped sensitize them in culturally appropriate ways to decreasing the practice of female genital mutilation.

Concluding this leg of the trip, the Council visited the Firestone rubber plantation, one of Liberia's top employers, where we discussed the opportunities and challenges facing businesses operating in the country.

On 22 May, the Council returned to Liberia to visit the PTP refugee camp located in Zwedru, close to the Ivorian border, where we were briefed by the Executive Director of the Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission and by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on the Ivorian refugee situation in the eastern part of Liberia. UNHCR and other relief organizations on the ground deserve credit and our gratitude for the valuable humanitarian work they have undertaken to support the refugees in eastern Liberia.

We then heard from the refugee representatives and refugees themselves, who shared their experiences, their hopes and what they perceived as obstacles to their return to Côte d'Ivoire. Although the majority of Ivorian refugees have already returned home, those who remained cited fear of persecution, as well as land expropriation issues, as reasons preventing them from returning to Côte d'Ivoire. It appeared that accurate, timely reporting on the situation from their homes could help to counteract rumours and inaccurate information that circulated within the camps. Some refugees we met were clearly Gbagbo loyalists who said that they would not return until President Ouattara was gone, if at all.

Representatives of UNMIL and UNOCI also briefed the Council on inter-mission cooperation along the Liberian-Ivorian border. They noted the various security challenges that emerged following the Ivorian crisis, as well as the innovative joint steps they have undertaken to strengthen coordination and cooperation to better monitor the border situation and to facilitate refugee repatriation.

Overall, the Council witnessed the considerable progress that the people of Liberia have made since the end of the civil war in 2003. We left encouraged about the future, sober about the ongoing challenges, and even more cognizant of the need to handle UNMIL's transition responsibly.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Martin Briens, Deputy Permanent Representative of France, who will brief the Council on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Gerard Araud, Permanent Representative of France and co-lead of the Security Council mission to Côte d'Ivoire.

Mr. Briens (France) (*spoke in French*): From 20 to 22 May, Ambassador Menan of Togo and Ambassador Araud led the Security Council mission to Côte d'Ivoire. This eagerly awaited visit was the first since 2008 and came a year after the end of the post-electoral crisis that led to more than 3,000 deaths.

The Security Council met with all Ivorian political protagonists, President Ouattara, his Prime Minister, some of his other ministers, the Speaker of the National Assembly, parliamentary groups and members of the non-parliamentary opposition. The Council also met with representatives of Ivorian civil society in Abidjan and members of the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The Council travelled to western Côte d'Ivoire, near the Liberian border — a region that still bears the scars of the post-electoral crisis. In the town of Guiglo, the Council spoke directly with local people and authorities, as well as members of the local awareness and sensitization committee. The Council then took the opportunity to participate in a meeting of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Abidjan. My delegation conveys its warmest thanks to the Ivorian authorities for their welcome; the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Côte d'Ivoire, Mr. Albert Koenders; and all the personnel of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) who organized our logistically complex and eventful visit.

The Council mission's primary task was to assess the stabilization process in Côte d'Ivoire. Council members were able to note that the country had made very significant progress in scarcely a year, but that several challenges remain regarding border security, reconciliation, the fight against impunity and the deep-rooted causes of the Ivorian conflict, such as land-title disputes.

The Council spoke at length with President Ouattara and his Government on 21 May. They detailed their work to the Council and expressed their confidence that the security situation would gradually improve. They stressed that security sector reform still faced a number of hurdles, including the lack of resources. Members of the Council noted that the process of disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating tens of thousands of ex-combatants remains one of the newest and most complex challenges, given the situation before the elections, and that a lasting solution has yet to be found, with the support of the United Nations.

During the course of the Council's meetings with associations and opposition members, rifts within society and the political class were in clear evidence, revealing the scope of the task of reconciliation in Côte d'Ivoire. In that regard, the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission outlined its goals and working methods for transitional justice. The Government also affirmed its resolve to allay tensions and to restore and promote political dialogue with all political groupings, without jeopardizing the fight against impunity. That point was emphasized by President Ouattara.

The field visit to western Côte d'Ivoire was a turning point. The Council was able to take stock of the new threats to peace and security that justify the enhanced UNOCI presence in that part of the country and strengthened means to protect civilians, including through inter-mission cooperation with the United Nations Mission in Liberia. Those to whom the Council spoke on the ground expressed their serious concerns about the movement of weapons, attacks by combatants based in Liberia, the insecurity caused by the traditional Dozo hunters, problems with the Ivorian security forces, the humanitarian challenges to returns, and the confusion surrounding land ownership.

Lastly, on 21 May, during its visit to Abidjan, the Council was able to meet with representatives of ECOWAS, including its Commission and several ministers from the region. The meeting was chaired by the Foreign Minister of Côte d'Ivoire. The debate was interactive and wide-ranging and focused on the situations in Mali and Guinea-Bissau. With regard to the crisis in Mali, the mediator, Mr. Djibrill Yipènè Bassolé, briefed the members of the Council on the latest developments on the attack on the interim President and on the initiatives undertaken by the mediation. We considered potential approaches for cooperation and agreed to maintain a close dialogue on the matter.

In conclusion, I hope I speak for everyone when I say that this mission to Côte d'Ivoire made it possible for the Council to better understand both the divisions within and the exceptional resources of the country, and consequently the major priorities for efforts to be made by the United Nations still needed by the people of Côte d'Ivoire in order to emerge from many years of conflict.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Baso Sangqu, co-leader of the Security Council mission to Sierra Leone.

Mr. Sangqu (South Africa): I am pleased to give this account of the Security Council visit to Sierra Leone on 23 May, on behalf of Ambassador Sir Mark Lyall Grant, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, and of myself.

The aim of the Council's visit to Sierra Leone was to encourage continued efforts to consolidate peace and national reconciliation. During the visit, the Council met President Koroma and several of his Ministers, representatives from all 10 registered political parties and the National Electoral Commission. The Council also met members of civil society, including women's groups, so that the Council could hear from the people of Sierra Leone about the remarkable journey that their country has made since the civil war, which will continue with the forthcoming elections.

We would like to thank Mr. Jens Anders Toyberg-Frandzen, Executive Representative of the Secretary-General, and the staff of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office (UNIPSIL) for welcoming the Council and supporting our visit, in particular given how recently Mr. Toyberg-Frandzen himself arrived in Freetown. We greatly appreciate the support that UNIPSIL, working with the rest of the United Nations family, is providing to peacebuilding in Sierra Leone. Truly, that is "One UN" in action.

As you might expect, Mr. President, the forthcoming elections featured prominently during the Council's visit. We received from President Koroma a clear and welcome commitment to a free, fair and transparent process. Discussions with all political parties and the National Electoral Commission reassured us that good progress was being made in preparing for November's poll. While we heard that the political environment in the country continues to be dominated by intense rivalry and mistrust between the two major political parties, the Council was encouraged by the signing, by all the

political parties, of a declaration agreeing to contest the elections fairly and not to resort to violence.

In our meetings with the military and other representatives from the security sector, we were encouraged by the commitment we heard to army and police neutrality. The military and police training provided by the United Nations and bilateral donors over the past 10 years has clearly helped to develop a culture of policing based on protecting the security and human rights of all citizens in Sierra Leone. That work needs to continue.

On the issues of the purchase of weapons for the use of the Sierra Leone police, President Koroma reassured us that those weapons were transferred to the armed forces of Sierra Leone in the presence of international observers.

A further mark of the progress that the Council observed was the pride that the Government of Sierra Leone and the military conveyed to us about the forthcoming deployment of the armed forces as peacekeepers to the African Union Mission in Somalia.

At our luncheon with civil society, we met representatives of women's groups who shared their ideas about peacebuilding and reconciliation, including on the question of reparations for war victims. All speakers stressed the role that women can play as an early-warning system for potential conflict, and spoke in favour of greater representation for women in Parliament.

In conclusion, it is worth reflecting upon how far we have come. The progress that Sierra Leone has made since the civil war ended, 10 years ago, is remarkable. Of course, huge problems remain, including high youth unemployment, infrastructural dilapidation and a lack of institutional capacity. But there are grounds for optimism that Sierra Leone is on the path to building lasting peace. The Security Council will continue to play its role in that journey.

I am grateful to Ambassador Sir Mark Lyall Grant and the United Kingdom Mission for their joint leadership on this mission. I join other Council members in expressing my appreciation to the Secretariat for its diligent professionalism in organizing the mission on short notice.

The President: On behalf of the Security Council, I should like to express appreciation to all the members of the Council and the Secretariat who participated in the mission for the manner in which they discharged their important responsibilities on behalf of the Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

The meeting rose at 9.25 a.m.